

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE C-11

THE WASHINGTON POST
26 August 1982

PLO Trainees Cut Wide Swath While in Russia

In their determination to play Big Brother for the Arab world, the Soviets are learning that you can take the boy out of the desert, but you can't take the desert out of the boy.

Freed from the puritanical social restraints of their refugee camps, some Palestine Liberation Organization trainees in the Soviet Union evidently sought to emulate the Sheik of Araby, according to documents obtained from intelligence sources.

The trouble with the PLO swains was that, like many a country bumpkin before them, they chose the wrong girls for their amorous adventures and wound up sadder, wiser and broke.

The misadventures of the PLO trainees are conscientiously noted in a report by their unit commander, Muqadam Rashad Ahmed, to none other than PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. The document, obtained by my associate Lucette Lagnado, is dated January, 1981.

One luckless guerrilla who broke training and lived to regret it was Afif Mohammad Al Masri, a mem-

ber of the "Struggle Front" faction. Masri "did not behave himself," his commander reported sadly.

The young man "spent his time with one of the girls of doubtful character," the standard euphemism for prostitutes in the Soviet Union, where the profession does not officially exist. Masri took the young woman to her home, where his clothes were . . . taken by a man who claimed to be the girl's brother," the commander noted.

"He left her home without his clothes and reported the incident to the militia," the report continues, unfortunately without embellishment. One can only imagine the predicament of a lovesick Arab wandering naked through the streets of a Russian city in the dead of winter, looking for a cop. The militiamen proved equal to the situation, though. They managed to get Masri's clothes back for him.

Another PLO fighter-lover was Darwish Dhib Saad of the Arab Liberation Front. Described by his commander as "indecent and a pervert," Saad got mixed up with another of those women "of doubtful character." She not only took all his money, but a report intended for the PLO delegation as well. The commander had to lug Saad back to quarters "drunk as a lord."

The Soviets evidently lost patience with an uppity member of the Syrian-oriented Saiqa faction, one Ahmad Al Sharqi. Testifying on be-

half of a buddy who claimed he had been beaten and robbed by militiamen, Sharqi warned the police that "something would happen" if they didn't give back the money.

"This behavior brought on a serious response" from the Soviets, who "demanded that the man be returned home," according to the commander's report.

Though the embarrassment of his indiscretions clearly weighed heavily on Cdr. Muqadam, he also had some complaints about their hosts. There was, he reported, a shortage of Arabic translators. The PLO trainees had to sleep 10 to a room, which "caused difficulties." And some of the courses ended before the departure date, whereupon the Soviet tutors simply started over again.

In the future, the commander suggested, those chosen for training in the Soviet Union should be "of high quality, who are capable of representing [us] outside." He added that "it is preferable to lower the number in order not to harm the quality."

Meanwhile, Arafat will have this problem to ponder: how you gonna keep 'em down on the desert after they've seen Russia?

Confidential File: On the margin of a recent top-secret CIA report, an intelligence expert scrawled a sardonic comment: "Also noted a power play in Argentina by [one high-level official] with some humor, since he does not have the power base to work from."